

VZCZCXRO7306
PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHAK #2775/01 3191431
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 151431Z NOV 07
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4371
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002775

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/15/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ENRG](#) [AJ](#) [AM](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY: PRESIDENT GUL CELEBRATES
TURKEY-AZERBAIJAN FRIENDSHIP AND SOLIDARITY IN STATE VISIT

REF: BAKU 1362

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner, reasons 1.4 b, d

11. (C) SUMMARY. President Gul descended on Azerbaijan, November 6-8, with a delegation of over 140 businessmen, pledging to elevate the bilateral economic relationship to a level matching the two countries' strong political ties. GOT officials and media alike interpret Gul's first state visit as a return to an active Turkish foreign policy presidency, focused on deepening regional integration in the Caucasus and fostering closer political and economic relations with the Turkic-speaking nations of the Caucasus and Central Asia. In his speech to the Azerbaijani parliament, Gul underscored his vision for an interdependent South Caucasus, but emphasized the necessity of resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh (N-K) conflict with Azerbaijan before Armenia can be included in the energy and transport projects linking Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan. He also publicly cast a cessation of Armenia's efforts to promote genocide recognition abroad as a pre-condition for normalized relations with Turkey. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Turkish MFA South Caucasus Head of Department Firat Sunel traveled with Gul, and told us the visit reminded him of former Turkish President Turgut Ozal. Like Ozal in the 1990s, Gul traveled to Azerbaijan with a huge delegation of businessmen and a determination to align the economic aspect of Turkey's relationship with the political. Gul, he said, believes that politicians should create the necessary environment for closer relations, but that business and civil society should take the lead. Speaking to the Turkey-Azerbaijan Business Forum on November 6, Gul called on Turkey and Azerbaijan to seek new joint projects, like the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline. Accompanying Gul, State Minister for Foreign Trade Kursat Tuzmen stated that the existing volume of trade between Turkey and Azerbaijan and the level of Turkish investment in Azerbaijan -- \$2 billion and \$5.5 billion respectively -- were inadequate, and should be improved. Gul pledged to triple trade volumes, and endorsed Azerbaijan's bid to join the WTO. He also inaugurated a new Turkish-Azerbaijani bank.

ONE NATION, TWO STATES

13. (C) In Baku, Gul met President Aliyev, PM Rasizade, and Parliament Speaker Asadov. President Aliyev underscored Azerbaijan's solidarity with Turkey's main priorities: PKK terrorism, Cyprus, and opposing Armenian "genocide" recognition. The two sides issued a joint declaration, and State Ministers Tuzmen and Nimet Cubukcu (also accompanying Gul) signed four protocols, related to trade, youth and sports. More significant, however, was the symbolism of the

visit, meant to project an image of Turkey and Azerbaijan as "one nation, two states." Receiving an ornamental sword as a gift during a visit to the historic city of Gence, alongside the Azerbaijan-Armenia border -- the first visit of a Turkish president to an Azeri city outside of Baku -- Gul remarked that, in a region like the Caucasus, "one should always be ready to draw his sword." "This is a Turkic homeland, it has a great history," he proclaimed. Speaking to a special session of Azerbaijan's parliament on November 8, Gul emphasized the fraternal relations he believes exist between Turkey and Azerbaijan. "In brotherhood, there are no interests, no enmities." While in Azerbaijan, Gul also received an honorary doctorate from Baku University and participated in the ground-breaking ceremony of the new, Kafkas University. The university is being developed by the Cag Education Group, known to be close to controversial Turkish religious leader Fetullah Gulen.

GUL PRAISES AZERBAIJAN'S DEMOCRATIC EFFORTS;
SETS PRE-CONDITIONS FOR NORMALIZED RELATIONS WITH ARMENIA

¶4. (C) In his speech to parliament, Gul noted the importance of the 2008 Azerbaijan presidential elections to Turkey, adding that Turkey believes democracy will deepen in Azerbaijan. He praised the "sincere efforts" of Azerbaijan in enhancing its democratic structure and raising the human rights standard for its people. Gul stated that Armenia's poor relations with its neighbors stem from its hostile attitude toward Turkey and the occupation of Azerbaijani lands. In contrast, he noted that a spirit of peace and cooperation has, through multilateral cooperation projects, brought benefits to the people of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia. He stated, "The Government of Armenia should

ANKARA 00002775 002 OF 002

understand that the projects in the region are open to other countries that respect peace, cooperation, stability and good neighborly relations." Specifically regarding Turkey's bilateral relations with Armenia, Gul reiterated Turkey's offer to establish an historical commission, and stressed that as long as Armenia keeps pursuing its interpretation of "the 1915 incidents" at foreign parliaments, "normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia should not be expected."

¶5. (C) Asked if he thought Gul had set new pre-conditions for normalizing relations with Armenia, Sunel thought not. Gul, he said, was focused on the issue of including Armenia in the regional integration projects that Turkey and Azerbaijan have championed, such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway. Sunel said that Gul is deeply committed to an inclusive South Caucasus, but that Azerbaijan opposes any signals from Turkey that it might be prepared to relax Armenia's isolation absent a resolution of the N-K conflict. We reminded Sunel that it is the Armenian diaspora, far more than Yerevan, driving the Armenian "genocide" resolution in Washington, and that the GOT should be careful not create pre-conditions that are impossible for the GOAM to meet. Moreover, absent any clarity from Turkey on its relations with Armenia, the GOAM will have far less incentive to compromise on N-K. Sunel replied that the GOT is looking ahead to Armenia's 2008 presidential elections, and believes that Armenian PM Sargsyan, as president, will be more moderate than President Kocharian.

THE EURASIAN CENTURY?

¶6. (C) Gul's Azerbaijan visit can also be seen as a first step in a reinvigorated effort to bolster Turkey's ties with the Turkic republics. Turkey has already relaxed visa requirements for the Turkic republics, and Gul announced his intention to visit Turkmenistan, in early December, and later, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Despite his bold proclamation that the Eurasia region would be the "rising

star of the 21st century," Gul differentiated this effort from Turkey's earlier, grandiose attempts to forge close ties with Central Asia. Asked whether his vision for Central Asia included a "Turkish Commonwealth," Gul said, "The cooperation will definitely increase, but with one difference. In the past there was only an emotional attachment. Today, we have concrete projects as well. Emotions on the one side, rationalism on the other. We have to unite them now." As if to reinforce the President's first steps in this direction, PM Erdogan will attend the 11th Friendship, Cooperation and Brotherhood Assembly of Turkic States and Communities, November 16-17, in Baku. A major test of Turkey's influence in the region will be whether a Trans-Caspian pipeline can be constructed to transit Turkmen gas through Azerbaijan and Turkey into Europe. Gul stated optimistically in his parliamentary speech, "When the Trans-Caspian Natural Gas Pipeline Project Between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan is brought to life, the Caspian basin will become the most important transit point of the East-West energy corridor."

COMMENT

¶17. (C) Turgut Ozal or not, an active Turkish foreign policy presidency is back. So far, Gul's efforts have reinforced a top GOT foreign policy priority: to improve economic, cultural and security ties with neighboring countries and regions. In a period of intense Turkish diplomacy, Erdogan and Gul need to be careful to not step on each others' toes, literally (as they reportedly did at Ankara's Swiss Hotel, when they unexpectedly crossed paths calling on the visiting Saudi King Abdullah) and figuratively. But more than reinforce GOT priorities, Gul's stature and foreign policy experience might offer the PM some space to be bold and creative on some of Turkey's long-standing foreign policy challenges, such as Armenia. As FM, Gul was known to be a pragmatist on relations with Armenia, and implemented a number of limited measures to help relax Turkey's isolation of Armenia. Whether his remarks in Baku constitute a harder line or cover for the government to do something brave is still unclear. END COMMENT.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON